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Developing and administering the Community College Counselor Function Inventory to 75 students and their counselors, the author found a discrepancy between student and counselor perceptions of what counselor functions are important. Students tended to see the counselor role as primarily educational-occupational, while the counselors saw their role as dealing more with the personal area. Registering and scheduling of students and checking credits for graduation or transfer were perceived as important counselor functions by students and, though counselors were performing these duties to the students' satisfaction, the counselors did not perceive them as important. It was concluded that the counselor was working outside of his defined role, and it was recommended that the role either be redefined to include tasks not presently recognized as important, or an effort be made to change the students' understanding of the counselors role. (MC)

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS DEFINE COUNSELOR ROLE

A recent study regarding definition and appraisal of counselor functions in selected Iowa Community Colleges found that students generally disagree with their counselors regarding the degree of importance placed on specific counselor functions.[1] Students and counselors agree, however, that student needs in Iowa Community Colleges are being met at a relatively high degree of satisfaction.

Colleges participating in the study were identified through a directory of schools issured by the Iowa State Department of Public Instruction. Only those schools having directors of Arts and Sciences programs were selected. This method of selection yielded a total of eight schools. Seven of these school agreed to participate in the study.

Two instruments were developed for use in the study. The first instrument, identified as the Criteria Selection Form (CSF), was a form consisting of selected and modified items from the Counselor Function Inventory.[2] The second instrument, the Community College Counselor Function Inventory (CCCFI), was developed after the CSF was administered, and included the most frequently identified CSF items.

The first phase of the study consisted of the consturction and administration of the CSF. The CSF contained 68 counselor function items

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[1]DeVolder, John P., Definition and Appraisal of Counselor Functions in Selected Iowa Community Colleges, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Vermillion: University of South Dakota, August, 1968.

[2]G. Franklin Shumake and Merrit C. Oelke, "Counselor Function Inventory," The School Counselor, 15:130-133, November, 1967.

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and was designed to identify those functions which were most important to counselors and students. The form was administered to 304 students and their counselors. Items were identified as important counselor functions if 60 per cent or more of the students and/or counselors rated the item in the first or second degree of importance on a five point scale.

Nine counselor functions were identified by both counselors and students as important functions. In addition the students identified four items which were not selected by counselors. Twenty-three functions were identified for inclusion by counselors but not by students.

Counselors and students were not in agreement relative to the degree of importance placed on specific counselor functions. A difference, significant at the .05 level of confidence, was found to exist in twenty-six of the thirty-six items identified as important counselor functions from the CSF. The items identified are as follows:

Counselor and Student Identified Functions

Assisting students in selecting college courses.

Counseling with students concerning academic failures.

Counseling with potential dropouts.

*Counseling with students in regard to educational and vocational plans.

Providing occupational information.

Providing college information.

Providing scholarship information.

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*Significant at .05 level of confidence.

*Assisting student with vocational plans.

*Assisting students with college plans.

Student Identified Functions

Arranging course transfers for students within the school.

*Registering new students.

*Scheduling new students.

*Checking credits for graduation or transfer.

Counselor Identified Functions

*Counseling with students in evaluating personal assets and limitations.

*Counseling with students concerning learning difficulties.

*Providing the student an opportunity to "talk through his problems."

*Counseling with students concerning personal decisions.

*Evaluating students' adjustment to school environment.

*Conducting follow-up studies of students counseled by guidance personnel.

Evaluating student adjustment to curriculum choices.

*Conducting follow-up of new students to determine academic adjustment to school.

*Organizing school testing program.

*Administering standardization tests.

*Organizing the use of test results by faculty and administration.

*Assisting teachers in diagnosing learning difficulties of students.

*Accumulating personality data on students.

*Providing information concerning study habits.

*Providing information concerning personal and social needs.

Providing information on economic conditions related to future employment and education.

*Providing information on community referral resources.

*Teaching courses on occupational development.

Counseling with professional staff in regard to school problems.

The second phase of the study consisted of counselor and student rating of thirty-six items identified from the CSF which comprised the CCCFI. Student and counselor ratings were designed to show how satisfactorily or unsatisfactorily counselors and students perceived the counselor in fulfilling student needs as determined through the identified counselor function items. The form was administered to 75 students and their counselors.

Counselors and students tended to agree that most of the counselor functions in the CCCFI were being performed satisfactorily. Counselor and student perception differed at the .05 level of confidence on the following six items:

Conducting follow-up studies of students counseled by guidance personnel.

Conducting follow-up of new students to determine adjustment to school environment.

Conducting follow-up of new students to determine academic adjustment to school.

Evaluating student adjustment to curriculum choices.

Providing information concerning study habits.

Teaching courses on occupational development.

The study revealed that on only one item counselors felt they were performing a function satisfactorily where student rating indicated a significant difference in perception. This was in the area of providing information concerning study habits. The other five items identified as showing differences significant at the .05 level of confidence indicate that counselors were self-critical in their appraisal of these items, since students felt, more often than their counselors, that counselors were performing these functions satisfactorily. Counselors identified three items in the area of follow-up which they felt were not satisfactorily performed functions. Where programs were new, or in a stage of development, some colleges had not begun follow-up procedures.

It appears that there is a discrepancy between what counselors feel are important counselor functions and what students perceive these functions to be. Students tend to identify educational-occupational items more frequently than counselors, whereas counselors identify more items and include more functions dealing with the personal area of counseling.

Record keeping and clerical responsibilities are not recognized by most counselors as counselor functions, although students identify some of these items as important counselor tasks. Counselor functions such as registering and scheduling new students, and checking credits for graduation or transfer were identified by students as important functions. Counselors were found to be performing these duties at a high level of

satisfaction. With the differences found in counselor and student perception of importance of counselor functions on the CSF, it would appear that similar differences would be found in the degree to which these functions were being performed by counselors in administration of the CCCFI. This difference was not found to exist, and would seem to indicate that counselors are satisfactorily performing counselor tasks which they do not recognize in their role.

Iowa Community Colleges appear to be meeting student needs at a comparatively high degree of satisfaction, although evidence would indicate that the counselor is working outside of his defined role. If counselors are to be recognized in the role in which they would like to be perceived, it appears that an understanding of this role, by students is necessary. Counselors actively engaged in tasks which they do not feel to be theirs are likely to be perceived by students as fulfilling a part of their defined responsibility.

From an analysis of the data collected for this study, it would appear that Iowa Community College counselors need to define their role and adhere to it, or to modify their role to include some tasks which they are presently not willing to accept.